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DEPT FOR EUR/AGS, INR/EU, AND EUR/PPD FOR YVETTE SAINT-ANDRE

OSD FOR COMMANDER CHAFFEE

WHITEHOUSE FOR NSC/WEUROPE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KPAO](#) [AU](#)

SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS: October 4, 2007

Government Takes Tough Stance on Foreigners' Right to Stay

1. After the latest deportations of families to Kosovo, the government rallied behind Minister of the Interior Günther Platter on Wednesday. The OeVP ministers reiterated Platter's position that "laws have to be enforced," while Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer backed up Platter's proposal that the provincial governors will have more of a say with regard to deportations. The recent cases which led to a rekindling of the discussion about foreigners' right to stay may just be the beginning of a deportation wave. The Ministry of the Interior allegedly instructed the authorities in the regional districts to speed up the processing of old cases. [ORF online] According to independent daily "Salzburger Nachrichten," the security authorities have been given orders to see to it that the persons concerned are deported as soon as possible after a negative asylum decision. The Ministry allegedly also encouraged the authorities to plan monthly targeted actions to increase the number of people that are brought out of the country. In the meantime, the political pressure on Minister of the Interior is increasing - the Greens demonstrated before the Ministry on Wednesday and have threatened parliamentary action. Representatives from the Greens, Caritas and other NGOs have criticized that the new criteria for a humanitarian right to stay have not been put on the table. The Ministry of the Interior, on the other hand, refers to the paper as an "internal working draft" that must not be passed along. The daily refers to the fact that it received a form which aid organizations have judged as containing "nothing really new" and which certainly did not represent a new catalogue of criteria.

Teachers Protest against Comprehensive School

2. The debate about comprehensive schools is heating up in Austria with teachers pitted against Minister for Education Claudia Schmied. The former rejects a uniform comprehensive school for all students aged 10 to 14 - which stands in contrast to the present system where students are divided up into different school types at age 10. The Minister, on the other hand, wants to stick to her schedule and get her school experiment law passed in the Ministerial Council end of October. The teachers are proposing to hold information sessions on Thursday and Friday. [Die Presse, p. 1; other Austrian media] Meanwhile, support for the comprehensive schools has come from the respective EU Commission for Education, which, in its latest yearly report, presses for reforms of school education as well as research and development, where it has established deficits which could lower the competitiveness of the EU states, particularly in comparison with the US. Centrist daily "Die Presse" reports that, with regard to Austria, the EU Commission recommends the introduction of the

comprehensive school - here it refers to OECD reports according to which countries with selective school systems produce on average worse results than those with comprehensive systems. Likewise, the Commission points out that those children with a migrant or lower-class background would benefit from a comprehensive system where the selection of a school type takes place at 14 years of age. EU Commissioner for Education Jn Figel concludes in his report that the EU member states ought to "double their efforts" to enable the EU to cope with the challenges of the 21st century.

Mentally Deranged - or Bosnian Extremist

13. Aslan C., who was arrested on Monday after a failed attack on the US Embassy in Vienna, could be judged certifiably insane - in which case he would probably be institutionalized. He has been taken into custody and his mental state will be examined by a psychiatrist, announced the Vienna prosecutor's office. It has not yet been determined whether he has indeed contacts to the radical-Islamic scene. [Die Presse, p. 12] In the meantime, the second suspect in the case, Mehmed D. has also been taken into custody. The prosecutor has declared that there is "no evidence" of a "top-class terror cell" of which the two suspects are members. [Kurier, p. 12] In a statement to the press, US Ambassador Susan McCaw pointed out the necessity for constant vigilance: "Terrorism knows no borders" and that "even in a beautiful and peaceful city like Vienna one always has to be vigilant."

Breakthrough in Seoul and Beijing

14. Talks between the two political leaders of South and North Korea may result in an end to the state of war that still persists between the two states 50 years after the end of military actions. Roh Moo-Hyun and Kim Jong-Il have declared their readiness to engage in talks together with China and the US with the goal of working out a formal peace treaty. Meanwhile, decisive progress was also achieved in the six-party-talks in Beijing, where North Korea, for the first time, committed itself in writing to rendering its nuclear facilities in Yongbyon "dysfunctional" until the end of the year. [Oe 1 radio morning news, Der Standard, p. 4; other Austrian media] According to independent daily "Der Standard," an expert commission headed by the US and North Korea will be formed in October and initiate preparations to render the North Korean nuclear facilities dysfunctional. The plan is that the US will oversee the measures and also finance them. Until the end of the year, North Korea must reveal all its nuclear facilities and programs and commit itself to not passing on nuclear material, technology or know-how. In exchange, the US and Japan will prepare for the normalization of their relations with North Korea.

The Cowboys of Baghdad

15. FBI investigations are now under way to shed light on the role of the private US security firm Blackwater which caused the death of eleven civilians in Iraq in September 2007. While the Iraq government calls this a "crime," Blackwater refers to the necessity for self-defense. This incident is only one among numerous others: All in all, Blackwater is supposed to have been involved in 195 shootings since 2005 in the course of which 16 Iraqis have died - not including the previously-mentioned eleven civilians in the September incident. Now, a committee of the House of Representatives is dealing with the issue. [Die Presse, p.8] McCaw